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TRANSFORMATIONS OF CULTURE / MEMORY POLICY IN MODERN UKRAINE

(review of the monograph: Culture of Memory of Modern Ukrainian Society:

Transformation, Decommunization, Europeanization: monograph / O. Hrytsenko, N. Honcharenko, I. Kuznetsova and the others. Kyiv: Institute of Cultural Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2020. 352 p.; 15 illustrations)

ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ КУЛЬТУРИ/ПОЛІТИКИ ПАМ'ЯТІ В СУЧАСНІЙ

УКРАЇНІ (рецензія на монографію: Культура пам'яті сучасного українського суспільства: трансформація, декомунізація, європеїзація: монографія / Гриценко О., Гончаренко Н., Кузнєцова І. та ін. Київ: Ін-т культурології НАМ України, 2020. 352 с.; 15 іл.)

In 2020, a group of scientists from the Institute of Cultural Studies of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine published a monograph "Culture of Memory of Modern Ukrainian society: Transformation, Decommunization, Europeanization". One of the key authors of the book was a well-known scientist, translator, specialist in the field of cultural

policy, memory policy, cultural studies, historian, candidate of technical sciences Olexander Hrytsenko (1957 – 2020).

It should be noted that O. Hrytsenko is the author of many monographs, scientific articles, a participant in numerous scientific conferences in European countries, a connoisseur of several foreign languages. Among his monographs, the greatest attention of researchers, including historians and political scientists, attracted two monographs. The first one – “Memory of Local Production” (2014) – is devoted to the “policy of memory” of the first two decades of independence in two territorially close, but very different cities of Cherkasy region – the historic Zvenyhorodka and Vatutino, which emerged after World War II as a mining village near the coal mine. The second monograph, fundamental work of more than a thousand pages, “Presidents and Memory” (2017), focuses on different approaches to shaping the historical memory of modern Ukrainians professed by Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yushchenko, and Viktor Yanukovich.

The Foreword to the monograph under review was written by Anna Chmil, Doctor of Philosophy. In the Introduction to the monograph O. Hrytsenko emphasized that one of the most necessary and difficult objectives in the context of his research is the definition of concepts. First of all, the scientist cited the opinion of Yuri Shapoval, a historian: “Collective memory, historical memory, cultural memory, social memory, public memory, national memory – these concepts are used by researchers, quite often without finding a common language, without producing one well-established definition. However, it is always about memory as a channel for the transmission of historical experience and a factor in the formation of a national identity”. Based on this definition, O. Hrytsenko comprehended simultaneously the “theory of a cultural memory” of Jan Assmann, the German historian and Egyptologist, in which the key is the distinction between a communicative and cultural memory. According to J. Assman, a communicative memory is an idea of the past, formed in the daily communication of several (three – four) generations of living members of the community. Instead, a cultural memory connects many generations of the community; it is a consequence of the existence of numerous means of preserving information about past experiences, which the community uses to preserve its own way of life, its common identity. This set of “mnemonics” J. Assman calls the culture of memory (*Erinnerungskultur*); it provides an opportunity to revive the way of life (culture) and identity of the community after crises and threats (p. 13).

According to O. Hrytsenko, the model of a collective memory as a system (and not only as a set of ideas about the past, shared by the majority of the community) is fully compatible with the concept of memory culture of Jan Assman. Thus, he proposed a working definition of a collective memory as a system (or subsystem in the complex system of a modern society culture): “Collective memory is a system, the main components of which are: a changing set of ideas about the past that exist in the communication space of the community and are shared by most or at least a significant part of the community / society; subjects of ideas formation about the past (scientific, educational, cultural institutions, authorities, other opinion-making centers of society); infrastructure (institutions, communication channels and practices, mnemonics), which ensures the ability of the society to form, accumulate and store information (knowledge) about common experience, and, if necessary, – to update, rethink, use it for self-preservation, self-regulation and community development” (p. 14).

We should emphasize that one of the results of the memory policy analysis, comprehension of its theoretical and practical aspects is the “Conceptual Model of the Memory Culture of Ukraine” developed by O. Hrytsenko, which shows the complex relationships of basic concepts and interactions between people of different levels (p. 22).

In Chapter I “Post-communist Transformation of Ukrainian Culture and the Interaction of Ukrainian and Polish Historical Discourses” O. Hrytsenko analyzed the transformation of the culture of post-communist countries (including Ukraine in the context of Central and Eastern Europe), outlined the connections and compared the memory cultures of Ukraine and Poland in the historical context. In addition, the researcher considered the issues of historical research as an element of the memory culture, illustrating his reasoning by analyzing views on the interwar period in modern Ukrainian and Polish publications.

In Chapter I, O. Hrytsenko declares the importance of forming the national cultural space of Ukraine for its cultural transformation. He defines the national cultural space as a set of spheres of a socio-cultural activity, which together are able to provide cultural, linguistic, information needs of citizens. He covers the spheres of artistic, cultural and educational, leisure activities (professional and amateur), the air space of electronic mass media, the Ukrainian Internet resources, the national print media market, book publishing and book distribution, other cultural and artistic products and services, as well as related areas – education, science, civil society. The researcher emphasized that the weak integration of certain regions or social groups of Ukraine in the national context, their focus on narrow regional or foreign cultural industries and electronic media deprives the integrity of the national cultural space, makes it vulnerable to external interference (p. 55).

The researcher emphasizes that at present in Ukraine there are no leading positions of the national product in the main markets of cultural and artistic goods (book, film and video, press, music). The Russian entertainment programmes, Russian (and translated into Russian) popular literature, and finally the infamous Russian “pop”, “chanson”, and nowadays – “rap” still occupy a prominent place in the cultural and leisure “diet” of the average citizen of Ukraine. Prolonged violation of the integrity of the national cultural space causes significant differences in value systems, ideological orientations, sources of cultural and social information that arise between the population of certain regions of the country, as well as between large social groups on religious, linguistic and other grounds (p. 56).

Interesting are O. Hrytsenko's arguments about different visions of the Ukrainian and Polish historians on different aspects of the common past of Ukraine and Poland. The researcher noted that the joint work of the Ukrainian and Polish scientists to find unambiguous answers to painful questions was not successful. And this, by the way, is considered normal. Because a scientist is also a member of the society, the son of his people, he grew up in the social historical discourse of his country, and therefore he uses the concepts and ideas formed by that discourse, without noticing it. However, the “national features” of terminology and argumentation are pronounced when the historian addresses a foreign audience accustomed to other terms, stereotypes and evaluative judgments. Because of this, a foreign reader becomes wary of the author's arguments, and this turns into their unconvincingness, and even generates a complete rejection. Even publications aimed at, let's say, building bridges between the Polish and Ukrainian visions of the “difficult issues” of the past, due to their authors' too close belonging to the discursive mainstream of their memory cultures, become another illustration of how mutual empathy between historians of the two countries is getting lower (p. 89).

The author concludes that in the memory cultures of both countries there are elements that are objectively able to generate conflicts between them, but – on condition of their political actualization. For the Polish culture of memory, it is a close connection between the memory of “Volyn–1943” and the myth of “the Polish Eastern Kressy”, deeply rooted in the national culture, containing nostalgic imperialist elements, and the mythologized history

of the “cursed soldiers” of the Army Krayova. Such cultural constructions, positioned at the center of collective memory, hinder the spread of a broader, balanced view of many events in the society, including the bloody ethnic cleansing of 1943 – 1944 (p. 89).

For the Ukrainian culture of memory, such structures-obstacles are first of all formed by populist historiography and strengthened by the Soviet historiography, and therefore deeply rooted in the public consciousness mythology about the times of the ancient Commonwealth in Ukraine as the period of “Polish-noble oppression”, which legitimizes almost any anti-Polish actions (such as the “Uman massacre” committed by Haydamak Zalizniak and Honta), as a just struggle of the people against the mentioned above oppression. A later, ideologically anti-communist, but narratively similar myth about the UPA's armed struggle conveniently rests on the older layer of this mythology, which at the beginning of the XXIst century partially incorporated into the official narrative of the “Ukrainian liberation movement of the XXth century”. The heroic and sacrificial mythology of the UPA, like the mythology of the AK in Poland, is supported by a powerful layer of communicative memory of the population of Galicia and Volhynia, whose traumatic experiences and family memories are closely linked to nationalist underground activities and the Soviet repression against “the Ukrainian nationalists” (pp. 89–90).

O. Hrytsenko notes that in Poland and Ukraine these heroic and sacrificial myths have a considerable audience and from time to time are exploited in the state policy of memory, they are reproduced and affirmed by popular cultures (historical fiction, fictionalized memoirs, as well as films, TV shows and comics), forming an ever-thicker layer of a cultural memory which is increasingly difficult to deconstruct by spreading balanced, less conflicting ideas about the past of the two peoples. Thus, the scholar identifies the causes of chronic conflicts in the Ukrainian-Polish relations over the “difficult issues” of the past. The first reason is the presence of deeply traumatic events in the common past, even relatively recent (there are living witnesses in both countries) and such events the moral and political assessments of their participants, common in Polish and Ukrainian societies, are radically different (“our” – heroes, “their” – villains). The second reason is the presence of numerous and influential groups and even institutions in both countries that formed and cultivated radical narratives about these traumatic events, and consistently sought universal recognition of these narratives as the only acceptable “historical truth”. The situation is complicated with the fact that these radical groups also include those for whom these tragic events form an important part of a personal or family experience, i. e., an important part of their group identities and the communicative memory of the society. Traumatic memory determines the dominance of the “do not give up” instruction in relationships with other social groups. The third reason: the political elites of both countries in their memory policy traditionally consider the priority to solve not those problems that arose in bilateral relations with neighbours, but those that may prevent them from winning the next election. It is obviously impossible to eliminate or neutralize completely any of these causes, and it is quite difficult to limit their negative impact on the Ukrainian-Polish relations significantly. Therefore, to hope that in the nearest future a deep and stable understanding of the two countries and societies in the field of “common history” is possible is at least naive (pp. 90–91).

In Chapter II “Decommunization of the Culture of Memory as a Key Factor in Transformation: Public Policy and Public Reception” O. Hrytsenko analyzes the process of decommunization of the discourse of the state policy and memorial practices about World War II in Ukraine; characterizes the implementation of “decommunization” legislation and monument protection; considers decommunization as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

Analyzing the policy of memory in Ukraine after 2014, O. Hrytsenko singled out several key messages of the new official discourse of World War II: 1) for Ukraine the war did not begin on June 22, 1941, but in September of 1939; it was caused by an agreement between the two criminal regimes; 2) during the war both totalitarian regimes committed mass crimes, neither of them was a “liberator”; 3) during the war, Ukraine suffered greater human losses than the United States, Britain, France and Canada combined; 4) the Ukrainians, as a “divided nation”, fought in many armies, but only in the UPA did they fight under their national flag; 5) we do not celebrate Victory Day using salutes and fireworks, we celebrate Remembrance Day, honoring the participants and victims of the war; 6) “Ukraine will no longer celebrate Victory Day according to the Russian scenario” (President Petro Poroshenko), because today, like 70 years ago, Ukraine is defending itself from aggression (p. 138).

The researcher emphasizes that the decommunized official discourse of World War II revealed several main motives: a) de-Sovietization – rejection of the Soviet mythology of the “Great Patriotic War” and the ideological terminology formed by it; b) European integration – introduction of certain memorial practices, dates, symbols adopted in Europe (May 8, poppy flower, etc.); c) Ukrainization – emphasis on the “Ukrainian dimension” of the war, the participation of the Ukrainian people in the war, its victims and “victories”, the inclusion of the Ukrainian liberation movement in the narrative of World War II; d) actualization – emphasizing the connection between the fight against the Nazi aggression and today's protection of Ukraine from the Russian aggression; inclusion of anti-terrorist operation veterans into the circle of those who should be honoured on May 8 and 9. O. Hrytsenko emphasizes a certain hybridity of the new discourse, partly enshrined in the decommunization legislation, which continues to protect the monuments of the “Great Patriotic War”. O. Hrytsenko considers the preservation of Victory Day on May 9 to be a sign of hybridity and eclecticism of the new official discourse on the war. Some inconsistency in the new discourse led to the introduction of European “anti-heroism” approaches to the memorialization of war, which is not always combined successfully with honouring the “mass heroism” of the people in war, as well as another innovation – the inclusion of “new heroes”, in particular – members of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1940s, in the circle of the honoured ones (pp. 138–139).

At the same time, O. Hrytsenko presented his own interpretation of decommunization as a socio-cultural phenomenon, focusing on the following aspects: the creation of this phenomenon, its regulation and social reception, the identities generated by it, its representation in a cultural communication. In his opinion, the decommunization of 2015 – 2020 in Ukraine took the form of three narratives: “cleansing”, “banderization” and “liberal” (pp. 166–180).

In Chapter III “Reception of Cultural Heritage of the XIXth – XXth centuries in the public consciousness of modern Ukraine” there are covered the works of Oleksandr Hrytsenko, Violeta Demeshchenko, Olena Berehova, Nadiya Honcharenko on honouring the memory and creative heritage of Ivan Franko, Les Kurbas, and the Ukrainian the Sixties, as well as the issue of presenting biographies of the Soviet cultural figures in Ukrainian school textbooks on history. The authors, in particular, note a strong trend of instrumentalization of the state honouring the memory of Ivan Franko, aimed at using the symbolic capital of “Kamieniar” not only in a political struggle, but also in solving local social and economic problems. At the same time, the authors note, firstly, the persistence and rootedness of the Soviet models of honouring the memory of prominent figures and the principles of memory policy; and secondly, the significant inertia of the scientific environment in the (re)understanding of I. Franko's creative and intellectual heritage, the niche nature of attempts not just to “repaint

Kameniar in national colours”, but really rethink his creative and intellectual heritage using modern conceptual and methodological tools (p. 218).

The conclusions of the section on the presentation of biographies of the Soviet cultural figures in the Ukrainian school textbooks on history seem to us to be somewhat simplified and declarative. The author Nadiya Honcharenko, notes that a complete and comprehensive presentation of biographies of cultural figures in textbooks can be an important didactic tool, because reading the biography helps to study the society through the individual: on the one hand – it helps to individualize the historical process, and on the other hand – it deepens the reconstruction of the past by studying the life of the individual. The educational aspect of biographical information is important, which can offer worthy examples to follow. She notes that the presentation of comprehensive information about prominent figures of the past, in particular, cultural figures as bearers and representatives of historical and cultural heritage, could contribute to a better understanding of historical events, especially events and phenomena of the Soviet period (p. 273). In our opinion, these are somewhat superficial and declarative pedagogical theses, which do not deserve the role of generalization in a scientific research.

In Chapter IV “Europeanization of the Culture of Memory in Ukraine through Understanding of Humanitarian Catastrophies” Nadiya Honcharenko focused on the historical and cultural heritage of the Crimean Tatar people in the cultural space of modern Ukraine; Valentyn Riabenky emphasized the drama of the history of Crimea in the modern sense, and Inna Kuznetsova clarified the problem of memory of the Ukrainian society genocide in the XXth century (the Holodomor, the Holocaust, deportations). Nadiya Honcharenko covered the main memory channels of the tragedy of the Crimean Tatars in 1944: scientific research, fiction, television journalism, feature films (including Haytarma, 2012), museums, etc. The researcher noted that nowadays it is critical to spread comprehensive information by other means – the publication of popular science publications in large editions and affordable ones (or free); production of TV programmes representing the historical and cultural heritage of the Crimean Tatar people, with the involvement of scientists (rather than regular chatterboxes – favorites of TV channels); production and distribution of feature films, which should form not only intellectual guidelines, but also emotional reception of the Crimean Tatar issues; translations into Ukrainian and dissemination of works of the Crimean Tatar literature – both classical and modern – in order to form an adequate idea of its history and new tendencies (p. 284).

Valentyn Riabenky, based on Umberto Eco's concept of ur-fascism (1995), in his article tried to prove the existence of ur-fascism in the Russian Federation, demonstrating this by the example of the history of Crimea. He uses the term “communo-fascism” actively, borrowing it from the phraseology of Nobel Laureate Academician I. Pavlov (pp. 320–326). In countering Russia's “hybrid” aggression and in search of mechanisms to reduce its influence, he proposes, to increase military capabilities along with strengthening the country's security sector; to provide, as a priority of the state policy, legislative, tax, financial support for the Ukrainian science, education and culture, in particular – cultural industries (public television, cinema, publishing, exhibition, touring). After all, the development of critical thinking, the introduction of useful educational skills, the dissemination of quality and competitive national cultural product will contribute to the formation of a holistic and powerful information and cultural space of Ukraine, able to protect our compatriots from the propaganda invasion of the Russian Federation (p. 327).

In Inna Kuznetsova's article, the genocidal actions against the Ukrainian society carried out by the Soviet state in the XXth century included not only the Holodomor and the

Holocaust, but also deportations, including the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944. In her opinion, it will be useful to continue the work to establish the truth about Ukraine in the world and to revive the historical memory of the Ukrainians – the creators of the Ukrainian political nation, remembering the views of a scientist and a nobleman Rafal Lemkin. Since hybrid warfare, in addition to information and psychological (facts, information, short-term impact on the consciousness of the society), has a cognitive component (interpretation, identity, self-identification, concepts of the past-present-future, etc.), domestic scientists and experts should be the “first to meet the enemy” – to identify / expose the “new language of Ur-Fascism”, to reject the sporadic, unsystematic, non-conceptual nature of the humanities researches and to propose a methodology for analyzing the construction of a picture of the world in the opposition to the aggression of the Russian Federation (p. 340).

The peer-reviewed monograph is not without certain shortcomings inherent in collective monographs: a certain thematic and semantic eclecticism, inconsistency of conclusions, some journalism, superficiality of the proposed ideas for solving problems.

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